

orig. SALT

NSC to Give Carter Power Balance Review

By Vernon A. Guidry
Washington Star Staff Writer

Carter administration national security officials have scheduled a major re-examination of U.S. and Soviet strategic might next week when they present the president with options for a controversial new generation of intercontinental missile.

President Carter scheduled a Cabinet-level meeting Monday afternoon to hear the views of his top advisers on the new weapon and to hear an update of the assessment of the existing strategic balance between the two superpowers.

One centrally placed official points out that it has been two years since the strategic balance was updated. "This is just a straightforward effort to put all the nuts and bolts into a strategic context to try to give it an overall view that some people have accused us of lacking in the past," he said.

The review has been in the works some eight to 10 months and was not done to bolster chances of gaining more funds in internal budget-writing skirmishes, says this official.

Defense Secretary Harold Brown and presidential national security affairs adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski succeeded in postponing a meeting with the president on the fiscal 1981 defense budget until they could make their presentation on the new missile and the new strategic assessments Monday.

"SOME PEOPLE see it as a rather heavy-handed power play by the national security types," said another administration official.

The reason is that a goal near to Carter's heart — a balanced budget — may be attainable, if the economy cooperates. "If Carter thinks he can balance the budget in 1981, he will go for it," says an official. That puts a premium on getting the president's attention now, he continues.

Another well-placed official flatly rejected any budgetary motive in the reassessment, noting that budgetary guidance has already gone out to the departments.

Knowledgeable sources say the strategic assessment for Monday's meeting was prepared by the staff of the National Security Council and may well generate controversy among excluded agencies such as the CIA, and the State and Defense departments.

Other sources say, however, that no decision will be made on the basis of the internal security council review.

Even while the administration prepared for a decision on the missile, liberal opponents in the Senate were working on counter-strategies. Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., was said to be working on such a plan for unveiling next week.

HATFIELD AND Democrats George S. McGovern of South Dakota and William Proxmire of Wisconsin have threatened to withhold their support for a new strategic arms agreement with the Soviets because it does too little, and because it seems to promote or at least permit a continued arms race.

The new missile decision is a question independent of consideration of the new treaty itself, but it has become bound up in the overall strategic debate that will accompany the fight to gain Senate ratification of the pact.

The options for the new generation missile have largely been narrowed to two. The first would proceed with a new, large Air Force missile, called MX, deployed in a series of trenches in Utah and Nevada.

This system, which would cost about \$30 billion, would be designed to frustrate Soviet war planners who might want to knock out U.S. land-based missiles in a pre-emptive attack.

The missiles would move on tracks within the covered trenches so that their precise locations would not be known. In the advent of an attack, the missiles would be rushed to a new position on the trench just in case the Russians had detected and targeted their original resting place.

PERIODICALLY, the trenches would be opened at random for inventory sampling by Soviet spy satellites to demonstrate that the United States had not exceeded limits on missile launchers set in SALT agreements.

The second option, less well defined, would push ahead with development of a new, much more accurate missile for missile-launching submarines.

Additionally, the cruise missile leg of the U.S. strategic deterrent would be increased and the new submarine missiles would be deployed in some form of land basing.

At a meeting last week, Brown and other top officials generally seemed to line up behind the trench option as the best one.

And while the new missile may have significant opposition in Congress, administration officials count on the MX missile to make the land-based missile system secure from attack than against it.